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OUR CONTEMPORARIES

BOND OR FREE?

They are still talking about free verse—both pro and con; although the champions of both sides insist that the discussion is closed, and the poets continue to do as they please and get their poems printed. We commend to Mr. Tom Daly and other fulminators the following contribution to the controversy from a recent number of the *Mercur de France*. It is part of the theatrical review of Dec. 15, 1920, by Maurice Boissard:

To say that rhyme is poetry, that there is no poetry where there isn't rhyme, is to express the worst poetic routine. Let's take an example—José-Maria de Hérédia, if you will. You know the sonnets of *Trophées*. God knows that those lines rhyme, but is it poetry, in the true sense of the word? Not in the least. It is versification—extremely brilliant, we admit, but still mere versification. It is made for the eye, for the ear, not for the spirit or the soul. It is a sequence of *tours de force*, a show of patience, suggestively like certain complicated trinkets manufactured with tiny shells by meticulous maniacs. Do you want a more general argument? You certainly have read poems by foreign poets translated into French line by line and without any rhyme because the translator had in mind only the thought of being faithful to the significance of the poem itself. Have you felt the penetrating charm of these translations?—a charm due solely to the feeling expressed, to the landscape described; charm that the lack of rhyme left untouched, or even increased, by means of those essentially poetic elements: vagueness, imprecision, indecision, all that which is poetry itself. Rhyme, with its dryness, its regularity, its monotony, its mechanical quality and exterior brilliance, would have left nothing of that beauty; or at any rate would have decidedly impaired it. Rhyme is nothing but a poetic make-up, a way to look like poets for people who know no better than to make verses; and it is high time to follow the advice Verlaine gave, to *tordre enfin le cou à ce bijou d'un sou*.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Not only rhyme is not poetry, but moreover it is an encumbrance, an obstacle to poetry; for its sake the poet falsifies his inspiration.

Probably Mr. Daly's favorite magazine is *Scribner's*, for we read in one of its recent advertisements:

The four or more poems contained in a representative number of *Scribner's* are joyous, lyrical, and well-conceived. Such themes as the bird on the bough, summer in Arcady, the little silver strip of road, are preferred over grave or mournful subjects. Yet all poems must conform to a high standard of dignity and distinctiveness.

CORRESPONDENCE

CONCERNING "KORA IN HELL"

Dear POETRY:—Writers, quite as much in the countries of older art tradition as in America, may be divided into two classes: one the professionals, whose concern is style, technique, finished achievement; the other, those who attempt at least to explore and develop new experience. The former class restrict themselves generally to quite conventional themes; or, if they are very daring, develop for themselves new themes—about which they write "verses"—ultimately hardening into a manner, inherited or their own, and softening in so far as ability to penetrate deeply goes. Limiting ourselves strictly to America, we may mention such poets of the first class as Masters, Sandburg, Aiken—the list need stop short of only a very few names. Particularly with Sandburg may one be sure that he will take an image, and consciously sustain and develop it, long after he has lost poignant feeling for the validity of the image. He is a